

R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 017 528

TE 500 054

FACULTY TEACHING LOADS IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES. (TITLE SUPPLIED).

BY- BUCKLER, WILLIAM AND OTHERS

ASSOCIATION OF DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH, NEW YORK, NY

PUB DATE FEB 68

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.25 HC-\$0.48 10P.

DESCRIPTORS- *ENGLISH, *TEACHING LOAD, *HIGHER EDUCATION, *TEACHING CONDITIONS, *COLLEGE FACULTY, ENGLISH INSTRUCTION, COLLEGE STUDENTS, ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY, STUDENT ENROLLMENT, UNDERGRADUATE STUDY, ENGLISH PROGRAMS, STATISTICAL SURVEYS, STUDENT TEACHER RATIO, COMPOSITION (LITERARY),

THE FIRST OF THE THREE REPORTS ON TEACHING LOADS, A BRIEF STATISTICAL REPORT OF FINDINGS FROM THOMAS WILCOX'S NATIONAL SURVEY OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ENGLISH, IS ARRANGED ACCORDING TO GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION, SIZE OF INSTITUTION, AND KIND OF INSTITUTION. NATIONAL PERCENTAGES AS WELL AS OTHER FACTORS RELATING TO GRADUATE PROGRAMS AND REDUCED TEACHING LOADS ARE SUMMARIZED. IN THE SECOND REPORT, "TEACHING LOADS--AND OTHER MYTHS," WILLIAM BUCKLER DISCUSSES THE RELATIONSHIP OF TEACHING LOADS TO BROAD INSTITUTIONAL GOALS, THE "CLIMATE" OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS, AND THE DYNAMICS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE. FINALLY, DUDLEY BAILEY, IN "FACULTY TEACHING LOADS--THE STATE UNIVERSITY," DISCUSSES PROBLEMS AND METHODS OF DEFINING FACULTY LOADS, ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF INCREASED ENROLLMENTS AND FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE COURSES. THE PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED IF WAYS ARE FOUND TO REDUCE THE RATIO OF STUDENTS TO TEACHER AND YET INCREASE THE RATIO OF CREDIT HOURS TO THE TEACHER. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE ADE BULLETIN," NUMBER 16, FEBRUARY 1968, PAGES 4-13. (BN)

FACULTY TEACHING LOADS IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Teaching Loads

Findings reported by Professor Thomas Wilcox, University of Connecticut, from The National Survey of Undergraduate Programs in English.

I. National Percentages

About 50% of departments have normal teaching loads of 12 hours:

In 0.7%, 6 hours
In 2.5%, 6 hours and 9 hours alternately
In 16.4%, 9 hours
In 10.4%, 9 hours and 12 hours alternately
In 49.2%, 12 hours
In 5.4%, 12 hours and 15 hours alternately
In 15.0%, 15 hours

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

II. Geographical Distribution

Southeast

In 9.8%, 9 hours
In 41.2%, 12 hours
In 31.4%, 15 hours

South-central

In 8.7%, 9 hours
In 39.1%, 12 hours
In 26.1%, 15 hours

Great Lakes and Plains

In 15.3%, 9 hours
In 43.5%, 12 hours
In 14.1%, 15 hours

West and Southwest

In 25.6%, 9 hours
In 53.8%, 12 hours
In 10.3%, 15 hours

North Atlantic

In 20.0%, 9 hours
In 60.0%, 12 hours
In 5.0%, 15 hours

III. Teaching Load and Size of Institution

Small (up to 1,500 undergraduates)

In 13.2%, 9 hours
In 50.0%, 12 hours
In 17.1%, 15 hours

Medium-sized (1,500 to 2,500)

In 19.9%, 9 hours
In 54.9%, 12 hours
In 11.8%, 15 hours

Large (over 2,500)

In 21.1%, 9 hours
In 44.7%, 12 hours
In 13.2%, 15 hours

IV. Teaching Loads and Graduate Programs

Institutions with graduate programs

In 21.6%, 9 hours
In 45.1%, 12 hours
In 12.6%, 15 hours

Institutions without graduate programs

In 13.1%, 9 hours
In 52.4%, 12 hours
In 16.7%, 15 hours

V. Teaching Loads and Kind of Institution

<u>Private</u>	<u>Denominational</u>	<u>Public</u>
In 26.7%, 9 hours	In 12.8%, 9 hours	In 12.4%, 9 hours
In 48.8%, 12 hours	In 52.6%, 12 hours	In 52.4%, 12 hours
In 15.1%, 15 hours	In 9.0%, 15 hours	In 21.0%, 15 hours

VI. Institutions and Reduced Loads

In 16.4% of the English departments in this country there are no reduced loads; everyone teaches the full load. Other departments reduce loads for the following reasons:

16.4% make no reductions	13.2% for special teaching assignments
58.2% reduce for Chairman	26.7% for special non-teaching duties
7.5% for Assistant Chairman	23.9% for research, publication
12.9% for Director of Freshman English	2.5% for high rank
9.3% for Director of Graduate Studies	1.1% for seniority
27.9% for other administrative duties	10.7% for other reasons

VII.. Chairman's Load and Size of Department

<u>Department size</u>	<u>Percentage reducing Chairman's load</u>
0-9	40.0%
10-19	64.5%
20-29	86.5%
30-39	70.6%
40-49	85.7%
50-59	100.0%
60 and above	100.0%

VIII. Reducing Loads for Research and Publication

About 24% of departments reduce the teaching loads of some members to allow more time for research and publication.

<u>Department Size</u>	<u>Percentage reducing loads for research</u>
0-9	13.6%
10-19	27.4%
20-29	40.5%
30-39	23.5%
40-49	85.7%
50-59	85.7%
60 and above	33.3%

Departments with graduate programs: 30.0%
Departments without graduate programs: 14.8%

XI. The English Department's Teaching Load in Comparison with those of Other Departments

81% of those replying to the questionnaire believe that the English department's teaching load compares favorably with those of all other departments; only 6.1% believe that English departments have heavier loads than the average at their institutions.

Teaching Loads -- and Other Myths
by Dean William Buckler
Washington Square College
New York University

(Note: In view of the rapid turn-over in chairmanships in the last three years, the following remarks cannot be interpreted as having special reference to any individual chairman.)

When I was asked to speak to you on the subject adopted for this year's meeting, I reacted somewhat snappily: "But I can say everything I have to say about teaching loads in ten seconds!" I may have been right, as you will judge; I think that I was wrong.

I have chosen to address myself to the topic under several general headings.

(1) the relationship of teaching loads to broad institutional goals; (2) the "climate" of English departments; (3) the dynamics of institutional change; and (4) the role of professional organizations like yours in the improvement of the American college.

(1)

Let me lump and leap over three public relations axioms of our time: every American college is singularly devoted to excellence, creativity, and relevance. So our presidents persuade our trustees. It would be false, but less so, to say that every American professor is singularly devoted to higher salaries, lighter teaching loads and no committee work. Somewhere between these extremes of fabricated idealism and apathetic cynicism lies the reality of the American college. The one attitude is the vestigial remnant of centuries of unction, when the American college was an arm of the churches or, in later days, of the secularized moralists who have taken the place of religionists; the other attitude is the inevitable result of centuries of public neglect, on the one hand, and of a new public mania about college, on the other.

One can typify the "broad institutional goals" which I have in mind by answering the following question which I put without discourtesy to members of religious orders present: "Do you wish to conduct a college or a convent?" That is, does the faculty of your institution assume responsibility for the inculcation of religious, political, moral, and social values; or is it exclusively devoted to a value system which, though complex, is intellectual?

It should be obvious to all that my question is supported by a large suspicion and a larger prejudice. The suspicion: that a significant portion of the time and talent of college faculties in general and of English faculties in particular is spent on matters having little genuine relevance to legitimate collegiate goals by persons with little or no competence to deal with such matters in a significant way. The prejudice: that it is scandalous that we perpetuate such a state of affairs.

Let me cite some examples: it is doubtful that half the people teaching "composition" in the American college can define the term with any sophistication or that they understand even on a primer level the complex private-public world of thought, feeling, and rhetorical lineage which shapes and sustains the writer's craft. Neophytes are constantly asked to "teach" the great artifacts of Western literature before they have learned their own literary tongue -- are asked to be "sage" about Goethe even before they can be "simple" about Wordsworth. They are intense, and interested, and conscientious, and incompetent. And their senior colleagues are not much better as models: the senior professor who dismisses Crime and Punishment as "that morbid thing"; the rising scholar who joyfully declares in print his perception that the portrait of "My Last Duchess" can't be good since "Fra Pandolf's hand [had] worked busily [for only] a day"; the curious biographer who teases himself through several paragraphs with the poorly disguised conviction

that Swinburne's psyche was torn asunder when his proposal of marriage was refused by a girl; the matronly magistra who weeps before the administration because someone is promoted for working on that "unspeakably evil" Celine.

The relevance of all this to our topic can be simply stated: if we eliminated prejudice, however strong, as a qualification for professing and restricted our courses to our competence, our teaching loads would be considerably lighter.

(2)

It would be to go too far, I suppose, to apply to English departments Matthew Arnold's description of the English Middle Class: large, strong, dogged, and unenlightened. And yet, the temptation is, for me, irresistible. They certainly are large, larger than all the other modern languages put together, with classics and philosophy thrown in. Their strength is as the strength, not of ten, but of twenty percent of most faculties -- further augmented, of course, by purity. "Dogged" is a more difficult term: they are "top dog," certainly; like other "old dogs," they are highly resistant to "new tricks"; I wouldn't be a bit surprised if every college dean from a field other than English were warned by his classical colleagues: canis, canem, decane -- with a meaningful nod toward the English department.

In a more serious vein, I wish to argue that, on the basis of Professor Wilcox' report they have been somewhat unenlightened. Take his first statistical table, for example. We all know that the NCTE is only lightly oriented toward scholarship; and yet, we find that more than eighty percent of the colleges in America require teaching loads in English in excess of the NCTE standard. For want of better evidence, I accept this finding. The finding which I cannot accept, however, is that asserted in item IX of the original handout: "On 81% of the campuses in America the English department's teaching load compares favorably with those of all other departments." I am reasonably sure that this is not true; I am reasonably sure that the statistics upon which it is based -- belief rather than knowledge -- are unreliable; and I am positive that the publication of it as a fact will, unless corrected, undermine the value of the report.

On this matter, I can, without compromise to anyone, cite my own College. At Washington Square College of New York University, we have, officially, a 12-point teaching load; but no one but English teachers below the rank of full professor and basic foreign language teachers actually carries such a load; and, insofar as I can discover, the scientists are on two-course teaching loads. The reasons are historical and explicable and unjustifiable. But my belief in the principle that "what happens to another happens to oneself" has been so frequently verified that I cannot accept a finding which all my experience refutes.

But even if it were true, it would serve as a guideline to nothing very useful. If true, it means that chairmen of the largest and strongest departments have accepted the average lot, despite the guidelines of their largest professional association. If false, it means that chairmen of the largest and strongest departments, in the face of the guidelines of their largest professional association, have abdicated administrative leadership. And that is somewhat unenlightened.

Let me push this thesis a bit further. Too many chairmen of English departments have, in my judgement, compromised their departments on the issue of Freshman English: without really believing in it, they have rationalized it to deans and sponsored it with faculties. Different colleges have different responsibilities in this regard, of course; but they almost all act as if they were "in it" together. I believe that as soon as a college can get out of the whole business of Freshman English, it should. For example, if the average SAT Verbal score of its freshman class is 625 or more, it is ready to get out. With half the money, it could then establish a writing center for those who need it, set adequate proficiency levels for graduation, and turn its attention to the essential matter of literature.

On literature courses, too, chairmen have been lack-lustre leaders at best. Before a student can enter a course in reading and writing (that is, a course in literature) they require him to take other courses which do not teach him to read and write; and they staff these prerequisites with teachers themselves in the throes of learning to read and write.

But what is even worse, from a scholarly point of view, English departments have produced little or no compelling evidence that this way of doing things has any pedagogical validity -- scattered opinions and ardent views, surely; but no compelling evidence. Take the survey of English literature course, for example. Once upon a time, it was the bulwark of general requirements. Then, under the combined pressure of the "great books movement" and the "new criticism," it lost its hold upon English departments. There are signs that it is enjoying a resurgence of interest; but the arguments one hears in support of it are troublesome: it is a threshold course prerequisite to further study of English literature; it is a "cap" to the undergraduate major and a broad preparation for graduate study. As a result, it threatens again to fall into the drab world of "required courses" and "staff courses." What it should be is a very special course with its own distinctive content and peculiar methodology taught by someone who finds it a special way of academic life.

Again the relevance of this to our topic can be simply stated: if we eliminated programs, however traditional, from our curriculum and reconsidered the relevance of some of the habitual hurdles to student access to our offerings, our teaching loads would be considerably lighter.

(3)

At Washington Square College, we are on the threshold of rapid revision of teaching loads. As of September, 1968, no member of the faculty will have more than three courses; as of September, 1969, few if any will have more than two courses. To make this practicable, the faculty of the College will, I expect, adopt the four-course plan on January 8 next. [N.B. It did]

Many colleges have adopted the four-course plan for students without tying to it a two-course plan for faculty. I have tied the two together, and I have been criticized for having done so. Perhaps it is relevant to our topic for me to explain why I have done so. I need not make a brief, I think, for the four-course plan for students. Many of our most distinguished colleges have adopted it long since; and according to the evidence I have been able to gather, they not only like it, but are inclined to go even further in the same direction.

I have tied the two-course teaching load to the four-course curriculum in the interests of scholarship and pedagogy, and in those interests only. (Had I been economically motivated, it is obvious that I would have kept teaching loads at a higher level.)

It is my firm conviction that, in these critical times, colleges can afford to be anything but dull and routine; and I believe that onerous teaching loads make professors dull and routine. A man can hardly be a creative scholar unless he has at least half of his time free to devote to scholarship; and he cannot, in my judgement, be a good teacher unless he is also a creative scholar. A teacher is "good" in relationship to one thing only -- the students; and some of the so-called "great" teachers of the past would probably be mashed potatoes to this and the next generation of college students.

What I am saying is particularly relevant to the young scholar-teachers so much in evidence in the American college today. We bring them in with the greatest expectations, especially on their part, and then we proceed to grind them to death between two impossible demands -- that they teach inordinately heavy loads, on the one hand, and in a few short years gain national visibility as scholars, on the other. (Some of you

may say, "Well, we did it; why shouldn't they?" I simply do not believe that "we" did it in the same way that we are asking them to do it. The critical expectations of students for the foreseeable future -- in a nation in which the majority will very soon be under twenty-five -- will become increasingly dismissive of ritual, routine, and ragged literary experience. Our past has little visible relevance to their future; and unless we begin to put some of our assumptions under the severest scrutiny and modernize our ways, we will be responsible, and unnecessarily responsible, for the creation of an acrid revolution, since avoiding a revolution itself is no longer an alternative to which we have genuine access.)

What would I, personally, be willing to give up in order to bring about this more balanced world of teaching and scholarship in which a much publicized conflict may be found to be essentially artificial?

First, I would be willing to give up Freshman English. I would send the whole business back to the high schools.

Second, I would be willing to abandon the whole concept of introductory requirements and prerequisite courses. Instead, I would let everyone, within certain permissive guidelines, teach what he is best qualified to teach -- by training, temperament, and continuing commitment.

Third, I would re-assess the relevance to the quality and excitement of English departments of such matters as size and strength of numbers: it may be that both have been disguised impedimenta.

(4)

English departments have not, I think, made a contribution to the American college at all commensurate with their potentialities. They have perhaps been barometric; they have not been the source of new ideas to the extent, for example, that departments of physics and mathematics have been. Other professional organizations -- the NCTE, CCCC, the CEA -- have failed to provide the leadership necessary to bring them round. Perhaps the ADE, if it can rise above fretful and perennial details of housekeeping, will at last provide the imagination and the labor that will make the difference. But it will do so only if it sees things as they in fact are, ceases to make too large a virtue of habit, and tests every proposition against a severe measure of quality and distinction.

Faculty Teaching Loads: The State University

By Dudley Bailey
Chairman, Department of English
University of Nebraska

I wish I could talk about numbers without talking about numbers, and for two very good reasons.

The first of these is that I'm not sure what the numbers are about which we are supposed to be talking -- at least I don't know what all the numbers are, or even perhaps the most important ones. I have seen the extremely interesting special report of findings by Professor Thomas Wilcox, whose study of English Departments of the United States in the last year has promised very much for us all, and indeed has been of great help to many of us already. I am aware that about half the English Departments in American colleges and universities which replied to his questionnaire have 12-hour teaching loads, that about 70% of the reporting colleges had 12-hour loads or higher and only 30% had loads lower than 12 hours. I am aware that 9-hour loads are most common in the West and Southwest, in large universities, and in private schools; and I am aware that 15-hour loads are least common in North Atlantic states, in schools of from 1,500 to 2,500 students, and in sectarian schools. This

sort of information is interesting and valuable; but I am not sure how much it helps me solve the problems my department faces; I am not sure that these numbers are exactly the numbers that I need to know.

In the second place I'd like to talk about numbers without talking about numbers, because I have a feeling that we all really mean to talk about something else. Whether all is well or all is ill with English Departments in American universities is something I am not at all sure of. But I feel reasonably sure that the numbers will be the same whatever view we may take of our present circumstances. In short, statistics will not bend with our inclinations really, however much they may help support whatever opinion we happen to have about our status. English Department chairmen are continuously in the numbers game, no doubt. But I think our real problem is to discover what kinds of numbers we want to think seriously about and what kinds we want to ignore. And I am very much of the opinion that some of the figures we have paid attention to in the past have not been particularly useful in helping us to solve the problem we face, that of how best to teach growing numbers of American youths.

When I began teaching a quarter century ago, there was a good deal of talk about ratios between staff and students. At least there was a good deal of talk in colleges where such ratios as 10 to 15 to 1 could be advertised; I remember that schools having ratios approximating 40 to 1 didn't make so much noise about this feature of their educational plant. We all know, I think, that such numbers are doubly deceptive. In the first place, you can never be sure how either faculty or students are counted. As President of the Nebraska Chapter of the AAUP I have discovered that a mailing to the faculty is a mailing in the neighborhood of 1,300; but my school's report to the AAUP about our faculty salary rating lists the faculty at 553. And on the student side of the ratio, the numbers are similarly slippery: we are advised annually by our College of Agriculture that they have experienced again a healthy increase in enrollments, but we observe that there seem to be fewer students in our freshman classes year by year in that College. Some of us have grown suspicious that the administrators at Ag have begun to count pigs and sheep -- possibly because they have increasingly found out it is difficult to distinguish them from their students.

But even if we count teachers carefully and count students carefully, there remains another problem of interpretation of student-teacher ratios. As we note increases in the number of staff members who are occupied totally or in part with research or with administration, we must be on our guard to suspect the ratios which we see. It has become a standing joke among teachers of English that a man worth \$30,000 a year must not be allowed to teach very much, if at all. He's for the library or university think-tank, our analogs for the non-teaching researcher in the hard sciences. Now, I cannot find fault with a great deal of the research which is going on in American universities -- and as an administrator I am not over-eager to find great fault with administration. But to count such people when we compute a student-teacher ratio is to take some liberty with our words, and it may be, to deceive ourselves. I have been an administrator long enough to know that self-deception is one of the most grievous of administrative illnesses, and as this talk tonight may bear witness, an illness for which I seem to know only what my doctor calls conservative methods of treatment.

Student-teacher ratio as a means of expressing teaching loads is not very satisfactory, it seems to me. But I am very much inclined to believe that it is rather less mischievous than the method now more commonly employed, that of stating teaching loads in terms of credit hours. When I made mention earlier of 12-hour loads and 9-hour loads and 15-hour loads, I want to assure you that I for one did not know what I was talking about. Others perhaps do. Each year at hiring time, I talk with bright and attractive young men and women. Whether any of them is receptive to the sort of persuasion I have to dispense, I am never quite sure; but I am reasonably sure that all of them will ask me knowingly about the teaching load in my department and nearly all of them will be satisfied that my response of "9 hours" means something fairly clear. At least for a number of years I've had no young man or woman pursue the question beyond that point.

Yet this is a matter that demands further examination. In my department a professorial staff member teaching 9 hours deals with something in the neighborhood of 70 students each semester. In another department in my college, where the answer to the young man or woman's questions would be "6 hours," the professorial staff member could anticipate dealing with upwards of 180 students each semester. I think we all very well know that it would be possible for us to reduce our maximum teaching load to three hours a semester if we become truly convinced that the 3 or 6 or 9 or 12 is a number of real substance.

There are other methods of talking numerically about teaching loads. I cannot avoid a brief mention of one possibility that interests me. I am continually fascinated by the wide disparities in the instructional cost per student-credit hour to be found in various departments of my own university. Of course, I have always known that English is about the cheapest thing in the world to get taught, and I won't bore you with a recitation of how badly I am treated. But I find it interesting to observe that in my institution -- in instructional cost, mind you, not equipment and buildings and laboratories -- it is 3 or 4 times as expensive to prepare teachers for vocational agriculture in high school as it is to prepare teachers for other subjects in high school. And I find it intriguing that the instructional cost for a credit hour of horticulture is some three times the instructional cost for an hour in dentistry and nearly a dozen times as expensive as an hour in English or history or mathematics or chemistry. The extent to which numbers of this sort might help us solve some of the problems we face in the teaching of students I am not prepared to say; but I have more than a hunch that English department chairmen -- and indeed deans of colleges of arts and sciences -- have been rather less interested in numbers of this sort than they should have been through the years.

I don't greatly like credit hours as a basis on which to talk about teaching load; but in my institution I am not given an alternative. In the past few sessions of our legislature the university budget has increasingly been put on that basis, and legislative appropriations for staff and for increases in staff have been calculated in the neighborhood of 500 credit hours per full-time staff member. I doubt that our experience in Nebraska has been unique. At cynical moments, I suspect that legislators are given to a quantification of this sort, because it saves them from rather more difficult considerations when they consider budgets for universities.

The fact is, of course, that they cannot possibly make judgements about the more difficult considerations -- at least they cannot make such judgements as we want to live with. Now, if you live with a 500-credit-hour ratio and you live as I do in a system in which the 3-hour course is the base, you have to find some way of managing so that on the average a full-time staff member teaches 167 students in the course of two semesters. This means that you're going to have to work at it if you manage something in the neighborhood of, say, the recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of English about the workload of a college English teacher. And if you have a goodly number of graduate students in the bargain, you have to find ways of cheating on the system. The problem is, what do you cheat? or perhaps more importantly, whom do you cheat? And it is to this problem that I should like to give the remainder of my remarks.

I think we all know that, faced with such a problem as I have outlined, there are two fairly popular solutions. One way is the use of large lecture sections and the other way is the way of the disproportionately heavy freshman-sophomore load. I don't think either of them is a very good solution. Both ways have in common that they throw off the problem on the instructor and the graduate teaching assistant, who become the chief teachers in our departments, whether we like to admit it or not. Both ways have in common also that they sacrifice both junior staff and students to the convenience of the professorial members of the department, a convenience which seems to progress geometrically as the member advances in rank and distinction.

The standard argument for the large lecture section is that it is as well to lecture to two hundred as to twenty-five. Setting aside the question of whether anybody ought

to lecture to any number, I think that anybody who has lectured a bit knows very well that talking to twenty-five students is one thing and talking to two hundred quite another. Besides, if we are considering the teaching of university students, it is surely nobody's desire to maintain that that job consists merely of talking to either twenty-five or two hundred students at set times. And even if it made no difference how many we lectured to, it makes a good deal of difference the extent to which we are available to our students in a non-lecturing capacity. The students know the difference, even if we don't.

I have never heard an argument for increasing the load at the freshman level -- except that it is a way of reducing professorial loads. The usual arguments against it are those about the importance of composition and the paper load; I find these arguments a lot of malarkey, and I think many other chairmen do also. But I should oppose increase in the size of freshman classes on other grounds: it is probably wrong to place the heaviest teaching load on the youngest staff, however we may rationalize doing so with talk of limber bones and all that; and it is certainly wrong to place beginning students in the largest classes. The central problem of the modern university of some size is giving to the incoming student the sense that he is joining an intellectual community, of a size that he can understand and deal with. I find it rather droll to talk to anybody about an intellectual community of 20,000 or 40,000; none of us really adjusts to a community a tenth that size. It seems to me ridiculous to talk of such a community to the freshman student; I am not surprised that in most cases the student identifies with a community which can hardly be called an intellectual one -- not everybody associated with a large university is as stupid as the faculty. We ought to have sense enough to realize that if the student is ever to cope with the modern megalo-versity, he must somewhere catch hold of it; and I doubt that he will succeed unless we can start him off in small and hopefully comfortable groups.

My colleagues and I at Nebraska believe pretty strongly that large classes at any point along the way are less satisfactory than small ones. We have worked to reduce class sizes at all levels of our teaching. Over the past decade, we have scaled back our freshman classes from 35 to 25 (and 17 for honors sections), and we have reduced the size of sophomore and upper-class courses from averages of about 50 to maxima of 30 -- all in the face of considerable increases in enrollments. We have come to think that what is of chief importance is something akin to old-fashioned student-teacher ratios -- that is, how accesible the system we maintain makes each of us to all the students. We believe that all of us should have steady contact with freshmen as well as graduate students.

Since what we want is not possible in the face of a 550-1 ratio, at least if we continue to think in usual terms, we have been forced to think in unusual terms. The problem is to find ways to reduce the ratio of students to teacher and yet increase the ratio of credit hours to teacher. We've started with a couple of changes. First, in our freshman English, we have instituted what we call the "Zip" course. This course rolls our two-semester syllabus into one semester. We meet the classes five days a week for six hours' credit. The advantages of this system are various, in our opinion -- for instance, we think there is something gained in meeting new freshmen every day. It is especially appealing from the point of view of our numbers problems. We find this system enables us to reduce the number of students an individual staff member deals with by 40% while increasing his credit-hour yield by 20%. This sort of change is on this score very attractive.

Another way of handling this problem may lie in the moving from the three-hour base in the course structure. For a number of years we have felt that it is not educationally sound to ask our students to take five courses for a full load. We are slowly beginning to work toward a four-hour base, and I am inclined to suspect that a five-hour base is better yet. A four-hour course yields a third more credit hours with the same number of students; and again, this is very attractive.

Now, if you subscribe to the mythology which has surrounded the teaching of freshman composition for at least a generation, our change in freshman English may not strike

you as a good idea. And if you think there is something sacred about three-hour course structures or something ineluctable about the strict equation of class meeting hours and semester credit hours -- another idea that has gone comparatively unchallenged for a long time -- you may think we are moving in a sinful direction. But I am interested in involving all my staff in teaching all our students under conditions which are tolerable for the staff and productive for the students. And I am convinced that the answer lies in good part in our ability to reduce the number of students a staff member deals with each term and increase the span of attention a staff member can give to each of his students. We are hoping to work these ideas into the renovation of our old office building and into new ways of dealing with our majors and graduate students -- but that's another story.

**A
D
E**

BULLETIN *of the Association of Departments of English*

Chairmen of Departments of English in American Colleges and Universities

Number 16

February 1968

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED
BY Association of
Departments of English
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING
UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF
EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE
THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF
THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

© Association of Departments of English, 1968